Approved For Release 2006/11/13 : CIA-RDP75-00399R000100010030-3

INSTALLING AND OPERATING
AN AREA REPORTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

OCTOBER 1958

Approved For Release 2006/11/13 : CIA-RDP75-00399R000100010030-3

Approved For Release 2006/11/13 : CIA-RDP75-00399R000100010030-3

FOREWORD

This handbook furnished guidance to implement a continuing Agency Reports Management Program with the objectives of fewer reports, better reports, at lower costs.

Reports management is essentially applying the following common sense principles: Don't ask for or volunteer reports unless they are needed; if reports are needed, be sure that only essential data is included, and that they are complied and submitted by the most efficient and economical means.

While some improvements may result when these principles are applied by individuals independently, greater benefits can be realized when they are applied on a programmed basis, that is, throughout an organization in the planned and directed manner described in this handbook.

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INSTALLING AND OPERATING A REPORTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

CHAPTER I. GENERAL

1. PURPOSE

Reports are essential to the sound management of this Agency. However, reports are also costly for they make up a large part of our administrative workload. For these reasons we must assure that:

a. Reports provide adequate, accurate and timely data.

b. Reporting workloads are minimized and restricted to the capabilities of the preparing and using components, and that peakloads and overtime are avoided.

c. Only essential reports are established or continued.

d. Reports are appropriate to the missions of using components, and that preparing components are the best sources of the data.

e. Reporting procedures and systems are simple and orderly.

f. Instructions, definitions, and forms are clear and complete.

These objectives may be realized from a continuing systematic analysis of reporting requirements. This handbook furnishes the guidance for such analyses and outlines the mechanism for a headquarters-wide Reports Management Program.

2. DEFINITION OF REPORT

For the purpose of this handbook a report is an account or statement of information in written narrative, tabular, punch card or graphic form, transmitted from one organizational element to another in response to an expressed or assumed need for information. A recurring report is one for which there is a standing requirement for its submissions at prescribed intervals (daily, weekly, monthly) or periodically on each occurrence of an event or situation of certain prescribed characteristics (e.g., a report of an accident).

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3. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION AND SCOPE

a. The Agency Reports Management Program is administered on a decentralized basis. It is composed of component programs, each of which is administered by an official (hereinafter referred to as a Reports Management Officer) who coordinates reporting requirements within his respective component and collaborates with other Reports Management Officers in coordinating requirements for reports submitted between their components. Staff guidance and overall direction of the Agency Program is provided by the Chief, Records Management Staff.

b. This method of administering a reports management program avoids placing upon one person the responsibility for approving or disapproving a reporting requirement. Instead, it encourages the coordination of such action through reports review panels composed, on a permanent or ad hoc basis, of representatives from all components affected by reporting requirements. For example, at a Major Component level, a panel could be made up of Reports Management Officers representing each Operating Office; or at the Operating Office Level, it could be composed of a Reports Management Officer and a representative from each staff and division.

c. The Agency Program covers all recurring administrative or management reports submitted between: (1) Headquarters components, (2) Headquarters and the field, and (3) the Agency and outside organizations, public or private. Individual components may expand this scope to include requirements for one-time reports.

4. POLICIES

a. Requirements for reports and rescissions thereof shall be in writing.

b. Only approved reporting requirements shall be established or continued. An approved reporting requirement is one that has been coordinated by an official designated to perform this function in accordance with the Agency Reports Management Regulation. Reporting requirements in effect on the date of this handbook shall be considered approved pending their continued evaluation in accordance with paragraph 4d below.

c. Each approved requirement for a recurring report shall be assigned a reports control symbol by the Reports Management Officer responsible for coordinating the requirement. (See paragraph 16 for the composition and assignment of reports control symbols.) Reports control symbols shall be cited in directives requiring reports and in reports submitted accordingly. An individual who receives a recurring report directive which does not cite a reports control symbol shall refer the matter to his Reports Management Officer and may defer complying with the directive until notified that the reporting requirement has been approved.

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d. Existing reporting requirements shall be evaluated continually for effectiveness and continued need. New or revised requirements shall be reappraised initially within 3 to 6 months after submission of the first report.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF REPORTS MANAGEMENT OFFICERS

Reports Management Officers are responsible for the following as applicable to reports affecting their components:

a. Examining proposals for new or revised reporting requirements, recommending their approval or disapproval, and coordinating their review with components concerned.

b. Periodically reviewing reporting requirements previously approved to ensure that reports are efficiently and economically serving the purpose for which they were established.

c. Stimulating the establishment of needed reporting requirements.

d. Developing or supervising the development of standardized reports and integrated reporting systems, as well as standard procedures and forms for the assembly and recording of basic source data for reporting.

e. Assuring that components within their organizations receive and promptly take action on directives requiring the establishment, continuance, or termination of approved reports.

f. Assigning, revising, or terminating reports control symbols.

g. Maintaining records, and publishing lists of requirements for reports.

h. Interpreting Program policies, procedures, and definitions including determining whether a specific reporting requirement is covered by the scope of the Program.

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CHAPTER II. PLANNING, PROMOTING, AND INSTALLING THE PROGRAM

6. PLANNING THE PROGRAM

Successful reports management calls for a planned approach. Consider the following in your planning:

a. PLACING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROGRAM

Facts obtained in analyzing reports can be used in other paperwork management activities and in management areas such as procedures control and organization planning. Reports management activity, therefore, should be conducted on an equal basis with other management services. Also, those responsible for reports management should have direct access to officials authorized to make decisions on reports.

b. ENSURING PROGRAM COVERAGE

The analysis of a reporting system may involve considering many factors such as: The flow of reported information through the organization; the requirements for information at each level in the organization; the procedures and records required in the preparation and use of reports; and the wide variety of reporting techniques and formats, particularly those of a more technical nature involving the use of business machines. Plans should therefore ensure coverage of the full range of reports activity from top to bottom of an organization, and if necessary, provide for the services of specialists in forms design, graphic arts, machine accounting, and integrated data processing.

7. PROMOTING THE PROGRAM

Need alone will not promote a reports management program. There must also be the desire for one. This desire should be created in advance of announcing the program by ensuring that those who will be affected by reports management understand and appreciate its objectives. Personal contacts are the most effective means of building good working relationships. Particularly appropriate are staff meetings with presentations by representatives of components having well established reports management programs. Management Staff Personnel are also available for assistance.

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8. INSTALLING THE PROGRAM

a. ISSUING THE PROGRAM DIRECTIVE

Issuing a clear and complete program directive is equally as important as planning and promoting the program itself. In particular, a directive issued by the head of a component indicates his support of the program. The directive should define terms, state the scope and objectives of the program, place responsibility for its administration, request or announce appointments of those who will take part in the program, outline steps for the installation phase, and state procedures to continue the program. This last statement can be very brief if a more detailed directive on continuing the program is to be issued later. Issuing two directives in this manner is recommended to keep the initial directive as brief as possible and related mainly to the installation phase. Samples of both types of directives can be obtained from the Records Management Staff.

b. INITIAL SURVEY OF REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

(1) Purpose

An initial reports survey is essential in installing the program. Such a survey provides: (a) A complete description and case history of each reporting requirement (inventory), and (b) an analysis of this inventory to point up reporting deficiencies and ways to correct them. Also, the survey furnishes experience on which to base policies and procedures for continuing the program. The importance of the survey thus requires that persons selected to take part in it should have a broad knowledge of their component's reporting requirements and be qualified to analyze them objectively.

( ) Inventory

The best way to compile an inventory of reporting requirements is to describe each requirement separately on a survey form. A form provides headings and instructions to guide the person taking the inventory and furnishes space for descriptions and comments. Furthermore, an inventory compiled on separate forms is easily analyzed, for the individual survey sheets may be sorted according to functions, subjects, reporting frequencies, organizations, etc., or divided among different individuals for review. The use of Form No. 521, Report Survey (Figure 1) is recommended.

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In using Form No. 521, the person taking the inventory should attach to the survey form a copy of each directive having a bearing on the report, a specimen copy of the report, and any other descriptive material. Report directives issued as agency or component regulatory material generally need not be furnished.

(3) Analysis

Each reporting requirement should be analyzed when inventoried. The need for reports required by the component should be fully justified. Reports prepared by the component should be examined with a view to improving preparation procedures, and recommending to requiring offices way to reduce or simplify reporting. Form No. 521, Report Survey, contains questions to guide analyzing reports. Guidance in more detail may be found in Chapter VI.

(4) Review of survey material

Completed Forms No. 521, together with all recommendations and supporting material, should be forwarded through administrative channels to the Reports Management Officer. All material collected should be reviewed by the Reports Management Officer to determine if recommendations can be applied immediately or whether further studies are necessary. Recommendations and plans for future studies should be referred to the chief of the component to whom the Reports Management Officer is responsible.

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CHAPTER III. PROGRAM RECORDS

9. SUBJECT-NUMERIC FILE OF CASE FOLDERS

a. Material collected during the installation phase of the program will provide a basis for establishing a case folder on each reporting requirement. Thereafter these files should be kept current or closed out as changes or cancellations occur. A case folder should furnish a complete history of the report and its current status. Each folder should contain the following in order indicated:

(1) Form No. 142, Request for Approval of a New or Revised Reporting Requirement (Figure 2), or Form No. 521, Report Survey (Figure 1);

(2) A specimen copy of the report (if available) or a sample of the report form;

(3) A copy of each directive having a bearing on the report, and if available, instructions for its preparation; and

(4) Memorandums, staff studies, surveys, data on source records and procedures, and other material pertaining to the report.

b. The label of each folder should contain the title the report, its reports control symbol, and a subject-numeric file index taken from the Handbook for Subject Filing. Titles should begin with a key word so that a folder may be readily identified. For example, "Monthly Report of Per Diem Allowances" should be "Per Diem Allowances; Monthly Report of." Folder labels should appear similar to the following:

ACCOUNTING 2-1 PER DIEM	PER DIEM ALLOWANCES: MONTHLY REPORT OF (COMP-Rep-1)

Different colored labels may be used to distinguish between the reports that a component requires (incoming reports) and those that it prepares (outgoing reports).

10. REPORTS REFERENCE CARD

Reports Reference Card, Form No. 855 (Figure 3) serves two main purposes: It provides an alphabetical cross reference to reporting requirements according to their titles, and serves as the basis for preparing lists

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of approved reports. Additional information other than that provided for by the headings may be kept on these cards. However, extensive posting to such cards is discouraged in favor of fully documenting reporting requirements in the subject-numeric case folders.

11. FOLLOW-UP FILE

The continuing effectiveness of a reports management program depends largely on a periodic reappraisal of each reporting requirement. To schedule these reviews, Reports Management Officers should maintain a follow-up card on each report, following the procedure below:

a. Use 5" x 8" or 3" x 5" cards in a vertical file. Each card should show the scheduled reappraisal date, the title of the report, its reports control symbol, and the subject-numeric file index of the report.

b. The card file should be indexed by month, and within each monthly breakdown arranged accordingly to the reappraisal date. Cards for a current month may be separated by daily guides numbered from 1 through 31 if the number of reports justifies this arrangement.

12. REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL INDEX

An index is needed to ensure assignment of reports control symbols in the correct sequence. The index also serves as a cross reference by symbol number. A vertical file of 5" x 8" or 3" x 5" cards is recommended. Each card should show the reports control symbol, the title of the report, its subject-numeric file index, and the date the reports control symbol was assigned.

13. ACCOMPLISHMENT RECORDS

In order to report accomplishments and develop program publicity, Reports Management Officers should draft briefs on major accomplishments and on projects and surveys undertaken. They should also maintain a record of the following:

a. The number of proposals for new or revised reporting requirements: (1) Coordinated, (2) Approved, (3) Disapproved;

b. The number of previously approved reporting requirements reappraised;

c. The number of report directives developed;

d. Savings (in yearly man-hours) accruing from the reports management program; and

e. Man-hours expended on the program.

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CHAPTER IV.
REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS FOR NEW OR REVISED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

14. SUBMITTING REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL

The originator of a proposal to establish or revise a reporting requirement should submit the following material to his Reports Management Officer.

a. An original and one copy of Form No. 142, Request for Approval of a New or Revised Reporting Requirement (Figure 2);

b. An original and one copy (in draft form) of the proposed report directive and all forms, instructions, and procedures, proposed to be issued; and

c. Any additional supporting material that will assist approving officials with their review.

15. REVIEWING REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL

a. PURPOSE

The best time to review a reporting requirement is when its establishment is first proposed. It is then that improvements can be made with minimum effort and maximum savings. Generally there is less resistance to change at the proposal stage. Reports Management Officers will also find this an opportune time to overcome any "rubber-stamp control" misconceptions by demonstrating the benefits of reports management.

b. DETERMINING THE NEED

The first step in reviewing a new requirement is to establish the need for, and the proposed use of, the report. If the report does not meet all the criteria below, it should be disapproved without further analysis. To be considered essential, the report should:

(1) Be commensurate with functional authority and the intent of delegations of authority;

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(2) Be timely and useful;

(3) Not duplicate other reporting requirements;

(4) Fulfill a valid need of those who will review and evaluate its contents; and

(5) Be worth its total cost. (See paragraph 28)

c. DETAILED ANALYSIS

If the need for the report is unquestionable, the reporting requirement should then be analyzed on the basis of the following essentials described in paragraph 26.

(1) Realistic reporting frequency,

(2) Practical due date,

(3) Efficient format,

(4) Clear and complete written directive,

(5) Realistic requirements for copies, and

(6) Economical and efficient preparation and submission procedures.

If the report, or any part of the report, is found to be unsatisfactory, the Reports Management Officer should make positive suggestions for changes before the request is approved. Any suggestions should recommend similar changes in the proposed requiring directive.

d. ANALYSIS AIDS

(1) One of the Reports Management Officer's main analysis aids is his subject-numeric file of case folders. It will disclose whether the report being reviewed duplicates or is related to other reports prepared or required by his component.

(2) As part of his investigation, the Reports Management Officer should discuss the proposed requirement with its originator. Questions such as "What created the need for this report?" "What would be the consequences if you couldn't be supplied the information?" "How will the information be used?" "What records will be maintained from the information you will receive?" will draw out justifications for the report as well as additional ideas for its improvement.

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(3) Personnel in offices where the report will be prepared should also be interviewed by the Reports Management Officer if possible. Discussions and observations at those levels will often point up improvements or preparation problems overlooked by the originator of the proposal. Furthermore, soliciting the views of those who will be responsible for preparing the report will encourage a cooperative response to the requirement.

(4) Assistance on reports management matters is furnished by the Records Management Officer for Reports, Management Staff. Advice on other management techniques applicable to analyzing reporting requirements can be obtained also from the Management Staff.

16. ASSIGNING REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOLS

a. PURPOSE

The Agency Reports Management Regulation requires that a reports control symbol shall be assigned to each approved requirement for a recurring report. Such a symbol identifies a requirement by number and indicates that the requirement has been approved by appropriate authority.

b. COMPOSING AND ASSIGNING REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOLS

(1) A reports control symbol is composed of a prefix to denote the level at which the reporting requirement was coordinated, approved, and assigned the symbol, the abbreviation "Rep" for report, and the numerical designation of the reporting requirement. Thus a reports control symbol assigned at a Deputy Director's level might appear as "S-Rep-1." In this case the "S" stands for "Support," and the number "1" signifies that this reporting requirement was the first one to be approved and assigned a symbol at this level. Subsequent reporting requirements assigned symbols at this level would bear numerical designations in consecutive order, e.g., S-Rep-2. S-Rep-3, etc.

(2) Reports control symbols assigned at Operating Office levels are composed in like manner. A prefix designates the Operating Office, and a number identifies the report, e.g., "OL-Rep-1."

(3) Each Reports Management Officer assigns reports control symbols in a separate series according to the categories of reports designated in the Agency Reports Management Regulation. Once assigned, a symbol is not transferred to another reporting requirement nor reused after rescission. A separate symbol should be assigned to each separate reporting requirement. A complex reporting system such as one involving a number of preparing offices, report forms, frequencies, or processing instructions, should be considered as

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a number of separate reporting requirements, to which each should be assigned a separate symbol.

c. WHERE TO PUT THE REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL

The symbol, preceded by the words "Reports Control Symbol," should appear in parentheses immediately following the first statement of the report title in directives, handbooks, and correspondence. The symbol should also appear on each new recurring report form and on each existing recurring report form when it is reprinted.

17. NOTIFYING OF ACTION TAKEN ON REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL

Upon completing his coordination of a request, a Reports Management Officer should record the approving official's decision and the reports control symbol, (if appropriate) on the original and one copy of Form No. 142. The copy of Form No. 142, the proposed directive, and any supporting material should be returned to the originator. The originals of the material can become part of the Reports Management Officer's records.

18. TRANSMITTING COPIES OF REPORT DIRECTIVES

Immediately upon issuing a directive which initiates, revises or rescinds a reporting requirement, the originator should forward a copy of the directive to the Reports Management Officer who coordinated the reporting requirement.

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CHAPTER V. SCHEDULING AND CONDUCTING REAPPRAISALS OF REPORTS

19. PURPOSE

Programs and operations may accelerate or decelerate unexpectedly. Organizational and functional changes may occur. New forces and trends may come into bearing. These changing conditions generally affect requirements for information and justify a periodic reappraisal of reporting requirements.

20. SCHEDULING REAPPRAISALS

a. As a minimum, reappraisals should be scheduled as follows:

(1) Each new or revised reporting requirement should be reappraised within from 3 to 6 months after submission of the first report.

(2) Each existing reporting requirement should be reviewed every two years.

b. Reports Management Officers are responsible for maintaining follow-up files (See paragraph 11) to ensure that reappraisals are undertaken according to an effective schedule. In scheduling these reviews they should consider:

(1) The need for a re-evaluation based on changes in conditions.

(2) The desirability of appraising reports according to functional areas, subject groups, or organizational areas.

(3) The desirability of staggering reviews throughout the year to distribute the workload evenly.

c. The reports that a component prepares, as well as those that it requires should be scheduled for review. Although a Reports Management Officer has no direct control over most reporting requirements levied on his component, he is not restricted from submitting recommendations to offices requiring these reports. Indeed, he is in the best position to recognize potential improvements that will affect both his component and the requiring office.

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III. INITIATING REAPPRAISALS

a. Reappraisals are best initiated by personal contact. Personal contact conveys a feeling of sincere interest, encourages the exchange of ideas, makes possible observations of how the report is processed or used, and ensures collection of complete data.

b. Certain circumstances may prevent initiating a reappraisal by an interview. However, the survey should not be delayed, for the success of a reappraisal program depends on the timeliness of reviews. As a substitute for the initial interview, Form No. 521, Report Survey, may be sent to the office responsible for the report, for completion and return. Figure 4 is a sample form memorandum for use in submitting Form No. 521 to a component. The use of Form No. 521 to initiate a reappraisal should be an interim measure. The Reports Management Officer will still find it desirable to discuss the report with those concerned with its submission and use, and to conduct a detailed analysis.

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CHAPTER VI. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

22. ANALYZING BY TYPE OF REPORT

A detailed analysis of each report may be made in any one of the following ways, as determined by reappraisal schedules:

a. Analyze all of the reports under one subject classification as a group, taking one group at a time.

b. Study all of the reports required or prepared by each organizational unit of the component.

c. Analyze each report by itself. Consider the need for each item, the frequency of submission, the methods used to prepare the report, and the way in which information is organized and presented. One report can be profitably analyzed by itself when it does not duplicate other reports nor tie in with a reporting system.

23. DETERMINING THE BASIC NEED FOR A REPORT

Consider answers to the following questions in determining whether there is a basic need for a report:

a. Is the information appropriate to the assigned functions, responsibilities, or authority of the component requiring it?

b. Does the report serve a purpose which could be accomplished some other way, such as through direct supervision or inspection?

c. Does the need for the report stem from an organizational or procedural problem which should be corrected rather than reported?

d. Can the requiring office obtain the same information from another source or in a different format or manner, e.g., a copy of another report, a machine tabulation from punched cards maintained for another component, or copies of operating documents?

e. Is the information reported actually and actively used as a basis for actions, plans, or decisions, and do these uses fully justify the cost of the report?

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DETERMINING THE NEED FOR EACH REPORT ITEM

orted items should be as few as necessary. Each item should have finite use, either with respect to immediate objectives or definite anticipated needs. Each item should be used currently by the recipient of the report. The analyst may be able to take necessary items from one report and add them to another, thus making fewer reports. The fewer the reports, the simpler the controls will be. The analyst can materially assist in eliminating conflicts by obtaining a uniform definition of items so that the possibility of misinterpretation is reduced to a minimum. The analysis of each report requires a study of all related information available. In making such analyses, the analyst should:

Obtain related reports from the case file; analyze all related reports item by item, entering such items on the worksheet illustrated in figure 5; point up areas of duplication; and make recommendations for consolidating the reports.

Determine the need for each item by obtaining accurate answers to the following questions:

(1) Is each item under the jurisdiction of the requiring office?

(2) Is each item required for an established objective? If so, why?

(3) Could the information in any item be obtained from any other source or in some other manner?

(4) Is the item as stated capable of misinterpretation or could it be stated more simply?

(5) Could the information be used for other purposes (other than the established objective)? Are there potential users of the information?

(6) If activities or offices no longer have anything to report, is the report still necessary? If a report is still necessary, do all the activities be required to submit a "negative" report, or may they submit no report at all? If a report is required from more than a single activity, this is a suitable report to be prepared on the report form and submitted on the due date, in addition to completing every item on the periodic report?

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(7) Are transmittal memorandums being used unnecessarily? The report form itself should be designed to include all necessary mailing and routing information without requiring transmittal correspondence.

25. DETERMINING THE PROPER LEVEL AND FLOW IN THE REPORTING PATTERN

a. The reporting pattern is the established path along which information flows through an organizational unit. The reporting pattern should follow the pattern of organization and command, with information being summarized at various points where decisions are made or where responsibility is placed.

b. An analysis of the reporting pattern may point out defects in the organizational structure of the component or in the operations of individuals. Such defects should be referred to proper authority for action. The reporting of detailed information to the top level in an organization should be given careful scrutiny and an endeavor made to stop unnecessary detailed reporting.

c. Details should be confined to the level where decisions are made or responsibility placed. Each report should fit into a complete picture and should be a logical part of that picture. Reported information should follow the lines of delegated authority but should not flow to levels higher than those at which decisions are made on the basis of the information. Good administration includes delegating authority to make decisions at levels where actual operations are carried out. Good Reporting stops detailed information at those same levels. A report should contain only information needed by its recipient, not everything the preparing office needs to know for its own operations.

d. The analyst should obtain a general knowledge of how the operator conducts his business and the aims of his program. To determine the proper level, obtain accurate answers to the following questions:

(1) What is the reporting pattern of the requiring office? Does this report fit into that pattern?

(2) Do decisions made at the requiring level require all of the information reported?

(3) Are program operations carried out at the same level where decisions are made?

(4) Would it expedite program operations to delegate to lower levels authority to make decisions?

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(5) If decisions are made at the level which requires the report, but program operations are carried on at a lower level, can good decisions be made on the basis of this information? Would it improve quality of operations to delegate to the lower level authority to make decisions?

(6) Does the information reported follow the pattern of authority to make decisions?

(7) Are copies of the report required by all points to which they are sent?

(8) Is this the best method of reporting?

e. At this point the analyst should be prepared to make recommendations concerning (1) the proper level to which information should be reported, and (2) the necessary distribution of copies. Each copy of the report should be accounted for, and every effort made to eliminate duplicate files. If appropriate, the analyst should make recommendations for delegating authority either to speed up program operations or to improve the quality of those operations.

26. DETERMINING OTHER ESSENTIALS OF A GOOD REPORTING REQUIREMENT

a. Programs on which information is reported often decelerate rapidly. Unless changed, the reporting frequency may soon become unrealistic. Or the opposite may occur--the pace of a program is stepped up, or situations begin to happen so frequently that they should be summarized rather than reported separately. Check a series of reports. What frequency is needed now; what is the trend?

b. The date a report is due in an office should, if possible, be one convenient to the reporting activity. End-of-month, end-of-quarter, end-of-year reporting should be avoided if possible since reporting workloads are heaviest at these times. Moreover, due dates should be based on working days, not calendar days. Determine the number of times the preparing office was unable to meet the due date. Also, how many times did a due date disrupt office routine to the detriment of operations? Was overtime ever required to meet the date?

c. A good report format should meet the following criteria:

(1) Be sinple in design, and standard for each preparing activity;

(2) Provide for transmitting the report without covering correspondence; and

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(3) be arranged so that the report can be prepared from records normally maintained by the preparing activities, and designed to permit the recipient to locate information readily and apply it to his needs.

d. One of the surest ways to meet the above criteria is to require that the report be submitted on an Agency form. Reports submitted on forms can be readily identified thus speeding their routing, processing, filing, and ultimate disposition (from a records retirement standpoint). In addition, instructions for preparing and submitting the report can be placed on the form for ready reference. However, the fact that a report presently is being submitted on an Agency form does not exclude its format from a reappraisal. Requirements for information change. The format satisfactory yesterday may be inadequate today. For example:

(1) Is there sufficient space in each box for fill-in?

(2) Is the form printed on such heavy stock that the number of legible copies needed cannot be made at one typing?

(3) Are reports prepared in such volume that carbon interleaved snapout sets would be advantageous?

(4) If copies are duplicated, do the masters (stencil, Ditto, multilith, etc.) contain the maximum amount of preprinted data?

e. Requirements for reports should be established by clear and complete written directives. Good directives mean good reporting. Consider the following points:

PROVIDING A SINGLE SOURCE OF INSTRUCTIONS	Cancel all previous directives which required the report, incorporating necessary past instructions in the new directive as an aid to personnel preparing reports.
PURPOSE AND USE	State clearly the uses of the data being collected. The office which prepares the report needs to know

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	this information in order to: (1) assure that the data reported will accomplish the objectives intended, and (2) make more accurate decisions in doubtful cases.
REPORT TITLE	Indicate the correct title of the report for later identification. Titles should be descriptive of contents.
DUE DATE OF REPORT	Specify the date on which the report is to arrive at its destination. For situation reports, specify how soon the report must be received after occurance of the event. Establish a due date for a recurring report which allows the reporting workload to be more evenly distributed by the offices preparing and receiving the report.
PERIOD OR SITUATION COVERED	Specify the period of time, or precise situation to be covered by the report. If data from several different reports are to be correlated, assure that the periods covered in these reports are comparable.
FIRST SUBMISSION OF THE REPORT	Specify when the requirement becomes effective, such as the date that the first report is to be received, or the first period to be covered.
DISTRIBUTION	Specify the number of copies to be prepared. Specify where each copy is to be sent.
FORMAT (IF NO FORM IS PROVIDED)	Specify the format for the items to be reported to help ensure uniformity in data reported and simplify the transcription, comparison evaluation, or other use of the data when it is received.

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USE OF FORM	be sure the form includes information on where the report is to be forwarded and from whom it is sent, in order to avoid use of separate transmittal correspondence. Request offices not to submit covering transmittal correspondence with reports prepared on forms. Specify where preparing offices are to secure supplies of the form, and the requisitioning procedure.
SOURCE OF DATA	Specify the source from which the information is to be obtained to assist the preparing office in easy compilation, and ensure comparable data from all activities.
PROCEDURES FOR COMPILING	Specify recommended procedures for obtaining and compiling the data. This will aid preparing offices to use the best methods, and ensure accuracy and consistency of the report.
RECORDING	Give clear instructions on each item to be reported. Use simple active or imperative verbs (as "Enter the total cost..."). Give only one instruction in a single sentence. Keep the sentence concise. Be sure that the instructions can be interpreted in only one way.

f. The need for copies of reports should also be analyzed in determining the essentials of a good reporting requirement. Assure that all who have an interest in the report are receiving sufficient copies. Also, check to make sure that every copy provided is serving a useful purpose. Ask recipients:

(1) Do they wish their offices to remain on the distribution list?

(2) Can they obtain similar data from another source?

(3) Is all the data utilized? If not, which can be eliminated?

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27. DETERMINING PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION METHODS

Methods of preparing and submitting reports are almost as varied as are types of reports. However, here are a few principles generally applicable:

a. Are files and other records arranged in such a manner that data can be readily extracted?

b. Do fiscal and other accounting records contain control totals so that the accuracy of detailed data can be checked?

c. Can fiscal and other accounting data be maintained on a cumulative basis to eliminate last minute workloads?

d. For historical, progress, and other documentary-type reporting, is a brief running account of significant events and accomplishments maintained to avoid trying to "think back" over the period?

e. Do graphs and charts reflect cumulative data? If so can information be added to the same reproducible master of the graphs and charts each reporting period?

f. Do reproduction masters (Ditto, multilith, stencil, etc.) contain the maximum amount of preprinted data?

g. Can data be recorded for photographic reporting; e. g., maintained currently on flex-o-line strips, production control boards or other types of visible record equipment?

h. Can machine tabulation procedures be used?

i. Are reports that are self explanatory forwarded without transmittal correspondence? Reports are considered self explanatory if submitted on forms containing spaces for "to," "From," and the signature of the signing official.

28. COMPARING THE VALUE OF REPORTS WITH THE COST OF COMPILING THEM

a. This area of analysis is necessarily a long-range part of the program, because it involves a detailed study of source records and the procedures for compiling, submitting, and summarizing required reports. To make a thorough cost analysis the analyst should obtain as exact figures as possible by:

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(1) Obtaining detailed information from selected preparing activities or offices.

(2) Using established figures for the cost of handling forms and maintaining files.

(3) Investigating the use of the report in the requiring office and the time spent in all phases of its handling.

b. To determine costs and to prepare presentation of cost factors, the following questions must be accurately answered:

(1) What records are required at preparing levels solely for the preparation of this report? What do they cost in man hours? What are equipment costs?

(2) What supplemental reports are required? What do they cost in man-hours?

(3) What records are required at receiving levels solely to process the report? What do they cost in man-hours? What are equipment costs?

(4) How many man-hours are required for actual preparation, including posting to worksheets, compiling, typing, proofing, and reviewing?

(5) How many man-hours are required by those who analyze and compile data from the reports?

(6) What are stowage and handling costs for each copy, and printing costs for the report forms used?

(7) Does the established overall need for the report and its use justify the costs.

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CHAPTER VII. PLANNING AND DEVELOPING NEW REPORTING SYSTEMS

29. RESPONSIBILITY OF REPORTS MANAGEMENT OFFICERS

To be of maximum service to operating personnel, Reports Management Officers are responsible for assisting them in developing reporting systems which will provide effective management controls over their operations. This responsibility involves:

a. Encouraging operating personnel to establish reporting systems for necessary controls;

b. Consulting with them on the data they need;

c. Working out details of reporting systems, including the design of records and procedures and the development of instructions and directives;

d. Educating personnel in the use of reported data, the records, and procedures; and

e. Evaluating reporting systems periodically to determine if they should be revised to conform with changing needs.

30. MANAGEMENT CONTROLS DEFINED

Management controls provide information for the efficient coordination of men, money, and material according to a plan. This information is in terms of precisely defined objectives, quantities, cost limits, and time schedules. Management controls may be divided into two classes: (1) Those that provide controls over programs, and (2) those that provide controls over operating performance.

31. ESSENTIAL FEATURES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE CONTROL SYSTEM

The most popular forms of control are accounting, statistical, and narrative reports. The following criteria should be applied in

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developing or evaluating a control system comprised of such reports:

a. It must be possible to associate conditions with the people responsible for them.

b. Procedures to obtain, organize, and distribute information must be written, standard, and specific.

(1) The source of the information and method of obtaining it must be specified.

(2) The information itself must be defined.

(3) Methods to record and distribute the information relating it to other data must be described in detail.

(4) Time schedules for each part of the control procedure must be established.

c. There must be adequate provision for verifying the accuracy of the information used for control purposes.

d. The system must be centrally administered and coordinated.

e. The system must be economical of manpower, equipment and materials.

f. The system must not be permitted to delay the work of the organization.

g. There should be an adequate organization for interpreting the information and investigating irregular or unexplained changes in performance.

h. There must be a basis or standard for comparing the information in order to interpret it properly. These comparisons may be between:

(1) Current performance of two or more similar but independent operations.

(2) Current performance of two or more individuals who are performing the same type of work.

(3) Current performance of an organization or individual and the performance of the same organization or individual during past period.

(4) Actual performance and formal program or operating objectives.

(5) Actual performance, and management's unstated or informal desires, or beliefs as to what the performance should be.

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(6) Actual performance and specific standards of performance set either arbitrarily, on the basis of past performance, or after analysis to determine what the performance should be.

i. Information must be made available while it is still current enough for use.

j. The information should be obtained on a continuous basis as long as it has control significance.

k. The system should be sufficiently flexible to allow reasonable tolerance for human imperfections and errors within the system.

l. Control information should be organized to fit the requirements of the people who will use it at various levels of the organization.

m. There must be adequate provision for constant adjustment of the system to fit changes in the management situation.

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CHAPTER VIII. DISSEMINATING PROGRAM INFORMATION

32. PUBLISHING LISTS OF APPROVED REPORTS

a. Lists of approved reports serve two main purposes: (1) They prevent the creation of additional reports by publicizing existing sources of information, and (2) they serve as ready references to ensure the prompt and proper submission of reports.

b. Each Reports Management Officer is responsible for publishing lists of approved reporting requirements which affect his component. Lists should furnish the following information on each report:

(1) Title of the Report.

(2) Reports control symbol.

(3) Frequency of submission and date report is due.

(4) Form number, or format.

(5) Requiring directives.

(6) Distribution of the original and copies.

(7) Components or activities required to prepare the report.

c. The order of listing reports depends on the number of reports and the uses made of the list. Lists may be arranged according to:

(1) Reporting frequencies, to ensure that reports are submitted promptly.

(2) Subject categories, to group together those reports in the same general subject area, i.e., accounting, communications, personnel, etc.

(3) Preparing offices, to furnish them with a ready reference to their reporting workload, and to ensure prompt submission of reports.

(4) Report titles (arranged alphabetically.)

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d. Lists may also be arranged according to combinations of the above categories. Each list should be accompanied by a statement on the types of reports exempted from the reports management program.

33. REPORTING RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM

The chief of a component having a reports management program will want periodic progress reports. Also, the Chief, Records Management Staff, will need periodic information on program status to discharge his responsibilities for: (a) Evaluating and reporting progress to higher authority; (b) coordinating program objectives; (c) determining problem areas; and (d) abstracting items of special interest for dissemination to all Reports Management Officers. The frequency of progress reports will depend upon the amount of activity of each Reports Management Officer and the requirements of his respective component chief. Progress reports should not cover activity for a longer span than three months. A copy of each program report submitted to the chief of a component should be furnished the Chief, Records Management Staff. Each report should provide the following information:

a. Statistical summary of activity covering the elements listed in paragraph No. 13.

b. Narrative summary of activity covering:

(1) Planned Projects - A project is planned when it has been scheduled but not started. A planned project should be reported only once. The title of the project and a brief statement of its purpose and scope should be furnished. Include estimated beginning date, potential program benefits, and estimated man hours that will be required.

(2) Projects in Progress - A project is in progress from the time it is started until it is completed. Only those projects on which some action was taken during the reporting period should be reported.

(3) Completed Project - A project is complete when (1) recommendations are accepted and the new procedure has been installed, or (2) when recommendations are disapproved. A brief summary of the results obtained and the man hours expended should be given. It is recommended that exhibits be attached for major projects, which may be useful to other Reports Management Officers.

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(4) Problem Areas - Include program administration problems as well as reporting problems for which assistance is desired from the Records Management Staff.

34. DISSEMINATING PROGRAM PUBLICITY

Each Reports Management Officer should be alert for ways to publicize reports management and the benefits being derived from his program. Posters, fliers, brochures, staff meeting presentations, and individual discussions should each be used for variety. The Suggestion Awards Program should also be publicized as a means of submitting suggestions for improving reports. The Records Management Staff will assist in developing publicity projects.

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